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AUTHOR	Fogel, Barbara R., Ed.
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ABSTRACT

This is the report of a five-year plan to reorganize the Harrisburg public schools, designed to achieve the goals of educational excellence, racial balance, equity, stability, and economy if properly implemented. For example, the plan includes special centers from pre-kindergarten through second grade, and an educational plaza for grades 6 through 8, involving team teaching and flexible scheduling. High schools would be comprehensive, yet provide more specialized facilities and services for individual students. Staff and students would be equalized and all groups would be transported to schools equally. Interim steps for school personnel and parents are also spelled out in the report. (Author/DM)

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REORGANIZING THE HARRISBURG PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A Plan for Quality Desegregated Education

A Project Carried Out By

The Center for Urban Education

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Pennsylvania

Harrisburg Planning Project Director, James S. White

With the Assistance of:

Dr. Robert Dentler, CUE Director
Barbara R. Fogel, Project Writer and Editor
Stanley R. Lisser, Assistant Director,
Community Development
Roy Mallett, Director, Technical Unit
Alice E. Manning, Staff Associate,
Community Development
Dr. Max Wolff, Senior Staff Associate,
Educational Parks
Kay Pickering)
Willis Fuller) Field Assistants

REORGANIZING THE HARRISBURG PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A Plan Submitted by the Center for Urban Education

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I. THE PLAN

The Center for Urban Education recommends the following two-part plan for the Harrisburg public schools:

Part 1. (to be put into effect by September 1970)

1. Two Early Childhood Centers, to include four grades - pre-kindergarten through second grade. One center will use -- Riverside, Camp Curtin and Cameron; the other will use Foose, Shimmel and Lincoln.

2. Eight elementary schools, generally clustered together, to include children in grades 3-6. These schools are Marshall, Downey, Steele, Hamilton, Melrose, Boas, Franklin, and Woodward.

3. One intermediate school for 7th and 8th grades at Webster and Edison.

4. Two comprehensive four-year high schools at William Penn and John Harris.

5. Provision for special education at Hamilton, Cameron, Ben Franklin, Boas, Downey, and Melrose and for emotionally disturbed and brain damaged children at St. Paul Church; William Penn and John Harris for secondary students.

Part 2. (to be implemented between 1971 and 1974)

1. Construction of a unified Educational Plaza for 6th through 8th grades by 1974.

2. Utilization of Edison plant as elementary school by 1974, and the elimination of Webster and Hamilton plants.

3. Creation of science focus in William Penn high school program and a liberal arts and humanities focus in John Harris,

both by 1971.

4. Development of a further educational sequence between William Penn High School and the Harrisburg Community College by 1974. Twelfth graders at William Penn can take some courses at the College, perhaps for advanced placement credit.

II. WHAT THE PLAN WILL ACHIEVE

The plan is designed to achieve a number of important goals: educational excellence, racial balance, equity, stability, and economy. If properly implemented, the proposed educational reorganization achieves these goals as follows:

A. Educational Excellence. By bringing together children from pre-kindergarten through second grade in special centers, the Harrisburg school system will develop a program of enriched early childhood education for all children. The Centers will incorporate Headstart gains into a continuing program, and all children will be able to reach the 3-6 year schools at about the same academic and developmental level. There will thus be less need for later compensatory programs. Because they each have a large number of children, the Centers can economically offer a wide variety of special programs and special teachers to teach them. Children will also share facilities that individual neighborhood schools could not afford. Not only gyms and playgrounds, but also psychological services, science equipment, programmed reading materials, and diagnostic

resources will be equally available to all children and will provide more opportunities for individual instruction and program than individual schools could manage.

The elementary schools (3-6) will also be better able to meet the needs of a special age group. The Downey School will retain IPI, and all schools will be able to implement more effective and more imaginative programs, such as IPI.

Again, there will be a wider selection of curriculum offerings than any neighborhood school could offer.

The intermediate schools for 7th and 8th grades and later, the Educational Plaza for 6th through 8th grades, planned for 1974, will make possible an intermediate school geared to the special psychological and educational needs of 11 to 14-year olds. No longer a "junior" high school, the intermediate school will give more individual attention to each child and recruit more specially trained teachers, not secondary school teachers waiting for "promotions" to the senior high. Educational innovations such as team teaching and flexible scheduling will help provide a program specially designed for children of this age. The Educational Plaza for all intermediate school children, planned for 1974, will include arrangements for better coordination of curriculum and continuity of program by offering facilities, equipment, and services to be shared. Because of the large number of children, more special programs and special teachers will be possible.

Because of the size, the Early Childhood Centers and Educational Plazas provide more resources for teachers and children; such resources also attract more black and white qualified teachers and bring teachers together for a pooling of knowledge and ideas. Educational excellence requires good teachers, and good teaching must have vigorous in-service professional staff development programs. The good facilities and good professional relationships of large well-equipped centers will, in turn, encourage teachers to try new ideas and activities and exciting teaching methods. Teacher aides will have a better chance to learn and to establish good professional relationships with a wide variety of teachers.

The comprehensive high schools will now include the 9th grade and will continue to serve both those students who end their formal education at graduation and those who plan to go on to technical school, junior college, or college. The vocational-technical programs will serve, as before, those who go from high school into industry; William Penn will be enhanced by additional science facilities and teachers, and John Harris will attract those with special interest in the arts and humanities. The high school, like the other schools, will respond to the needs of individual students by providing more specialized facilities and services. The curriculum specialities of both schools will attract students throughout the city, some, perhaps, who might otherwise have sought such programs elsewhere. Moreover, the relationship with the Harrisburg Community

College will encourage more students to go on to a four-year general college program as well as to the two-year general arts or specialized programs now available. The high quality of the program offerings will both retain present students and attract others.

B. Racial Balance. To ensure equal access to excellence for all, every public school in Harrisburg will reflect in its student population and teaching staff the racial and socio-economic composition characteristic of the public school system as a whole. Children will be assigned to schools through a computer program.

Racial balance, however, is not only a matter of equal access to good education; it is also, like better teaching, a component of good education. Schools and classrooms will be made up of black and white, rich and poor, quick students and slow ones. Educators believe that learning depends not only on libraries and laboratories but also on getting to know students of different races, cultural groups, economic background, and levels of achievement. The number and variety of teachers and children in the Early Childhood Education Centers and in the Educational Plazas will make it possible to group children heterogeneously, on the basis of social and emotional interactions as well as on the more arbitrary basis of age. Grouping for the most effective learning, however, does not mean that one child should be with the same group for all purposes - most children, as most adults, have some special strengths and

some special weaknesses. In good learning situations a child may be with a group of four for a science project, with another group of five for spelling and with just three other children for reading. Such grouping provides exciting possibilities for team-teaching, programmed learning and audio-visual instruction. It depends on each child's social and emotional maturity, learning needs, and on the dynamics of each group. This kind of flexible grouping requires a large pupil enrollment of a particular age so that a large variety of combinations are possible. The Early Childhood Centers and the intermediate schools will supply this kind of enrollment so that each child can develop at his own speed and in his own way, instead of being lumped together by age, race, or achievement tests.

The plan calls for a better racial balance of staff as well. The schools will continue to recruit vigorously black and white qualified teachers and administrators. They will also make a special effort to recruit and place throughout the schools a larger number of black and other ethnic group clerical, custodial, and cafeteria employees. Black non-professionals are now heavily concentrated in five de facto segregated schools. The reorganization of the schools will make possible a better distribution of non-professional as well as of professional staff.

C. Equity. No racial group will have to transport more children than any other group; each group will be subject to transportation equally since the computer program will assign

each child at random on the basis of race, socioeconomic status, and academic achievement in order to achieve completely mixed schools and classrooms. The same instructional programs will be available to everyone. (The only exception is the IPI program to be retained in Downey.)

Each Early Childhood Center will make its facilities available to every child in the Center. Services too will be better distributed since specialists need not move from school to school among different neighborhoods but can give each child the same time and expertise. Seventh and eighth grades in both Edison and Webster will use the good facilities at Edison. As new construction is completed, sixth graders will join seventh and eighth graders in an Educational Plaza where common facilities and services are available to all.

The reassignment of pupils to schools throughout the system also lends itself to a better distribution of professional and non-professional staff. Because races, economic groups, and levels of achievement are to be equally mixed in each school, there will be new opportunities and a new need to hire additional black teachers and black staff members, such as custodial and cafeteria workers. Children need models of their own race at all levels to respect and admire. The 64 black clerical, custodial and cafeteria employees now concentrated in five schools will be distributed throughout all the schools as part of a policy of assigning staff as well as students equally.

To be consistent with the standard of group equity, there will be a policy of fair recruitment, selection, placement, and promotion of staff on all levels in the school system.

D. Stability. The method of assigning students to each school will allow for adjustment of ratios each year to coincide with total population ratios. Since students are not assigned by district, housing patterns or population movements will not affect the distribution of school children. As population changes over the years, the board will be able to maintain the student ratios without changing the basic school plan. By 1974 the construction of a unified Educational Plaza for 6th through 8th grades will bring together all children of these age groups in one place, encouraging better coordination of program and maintaining a relatively stable student group at his level.

Better education will also have a stabilizing effect on the school population. Both those who go on to further education after high school and those who do not will have better preparation in the Harrisburg schools. Excellence is likely to act as a magnet, holding students and their families who might otherwise seek better programs.

E. Economy. Neighborhood schools tend to be uneconomical because each one must have facilities such as playgrounds, gyms, auditoriums, and cafeterias. They must also often share professional services of psychologist, guidance counselors, art and music teachers, who waste much of their time moving

from school to school. Neighborhood schools, moreover, vary greatly from school to school in the quality of their facilities and in their use. Many schools do not have laboratories, nurse's rooms, art rooms, music rooms and guidance counseling facilities, teachers of specialized subjects or skills.

In the large centralized Early Childhood Centers and Educational Plazas, expensive facilities can be used in common, and professional services can be centrally located and available to all. This common use of facilities and services will be far less expensive than the duplication necessary under a neighborhood school system.

The Centers and Educational Plazas can alwo use teachers and programs more economically. When specialists serve a a large number of students, their cost per student is relatively low. Smaller schools could not afford to meet as many needs because there are not enough students to make the best use of alternatives.

Large scale educational centers also permit more efficient and economical organization of custodial services, purchasing, and provision of hot lunches. The Centers and Plazas can save money by dealing in larger quantities.

Although construction of new Educational Plazas may be costly, they may be more economical in the long run than continued renovations of individual schools. Another cost factor of individual school construction is shifting residential patterns in the community. As people move, new schools must

be built and older ones, still sound, become underutilized. The reorganized schools with their large attendance area are impervious to such shifting residential fashions. The centers and plazas can provide more economically for absolute population growth.

Although more children will be transported under the school reorganization plan, some of this additional cost can be offset by what the parent now pays. Parents who drive their children to school or who send them on public buses now bear much of the present cost of transportation.

III. HOW STUDENTS WILL BE ASSIGNED

To see how well our short-term plan would work we analyzed the possible distribution of students enrolled in several different grades, and found that the plan would require busing approximately 28.8 percent of the total number of the present enrollment in the public schools of the Harrisburg school system. We arrived at this figure by estimating that children could walk to school a distance that ranges in some cases to perhaps a mile but that the great majority would walk a distance of less than half a mile, approximately what they are walking presently.

Pennsylvania law states that a child may walk to school up to a mile and a half. If the law were applied strictly, the percent that would require busing would probably be reduced to less than half of our estimate.

We understand that the geographical situation of Harrisburg, the need to cross railroad tracks, and the lack of traffic lights in many crossroads make rigid application of the law practically impossible, but we must emphasize that, if for economic reasons the board must reduce the amount of busing, the implementation of our plan will not suffer. Slightly increasing the distance which a student is required to walk to school would mean reducing the number of children being bused.

Pupil populations, by schools and classes within schools, will be balanced according to the following criteria:

1. Race evenly distributed with a maximum variance of 10 percent from the total percentages of blacks and whites enrolled in the system.

2. Sex of students evenly distributed among all schools and classes within schools.

3. Children from below poverty-line families evenly distributed, with a maximum variance of 10 percent from the total within the Harrisburg School District.

4. For grades 3 through 6, extremes of an achievement scale evenly distributed, so that all schools will have about the same percentage of children deficient in basic skills, as well as of the most capable of pursuing independent study.

5. Residential location considered in assigning schools so as to minimize busing.

Early Childhood Centers

To calculate the minimal busing involved in our plan, we had to have figures for the total enrollment in the 4- and 5-year-old kindergarten. These estimates were provided by the Director of Pupil Accounting and Child Guidance of the Harrisburg School District. We projected this year's figures on next year's classes. (See Table 1)

Approximately 20 percent of the 800 children going to K4 will not need to be bused because they live in the immediate vicinity of the Early Childhood Centers. Of the one thousand estimated 5-year old kindergarten children, we predict that approximately 35 percent will be bused. We estimate that approximately 35 percent of the first graders will have to be bused.

Table 2 shows our analysis of the projected second grade for 1970-71. It shows a total percentage of 53.2 blacks and 46.8 whites and a distribution that does not vary 10 percent from this total in any school. The total percentage of boys and girls is 51.7 and 48.3, respectively, and the variance is never more than 2 percent from this distribution.

According to these figures, there appear to be fewer children from families below the poverty level in the second grade than there are in the higher grades, a circumstance that we attribute to the lack of data on children who have been in the school system for a shorter time. Only one school has a variance of as much as 9.8 percent from the total distribution; the next largest variance is less than 5 percent.

CUE PLAN FOR HARRISBURG PUBLIC SCHOOLS

TABLE I

ESTIMATED TOTAL BUSING REQUIRED BY GRADE

Grade	No. of Children to be Bused	
4K	640	
5K	350	
1	450	
2	443	
		1,883
3	305	
4	305	
5	258	
6	263	
		1,131
7	348	
8	350	
		699
9	-	
10	-	
11	-	
12	-	
	TOTAL	3,713

CUE PLAN FOR HARRISBURG PUBLIC SCHOOLS

TABLE 2

PROJECTED 2nd GRADE 1970-71

	Classrooms Assigned To Grade	Percentage Blacks	Percentage White	Percentage Male	Percentage Female	Percentage Below Poverty Level	Total No. Bused In	Total No. Students
Riverside	2	51.5	48.5	51.5	48.5	15.2	35	66
Camp Curtin	12	48.4	51.6	50.8	49.2	14.9	241	382
Cameron	5	53.3	46.7	51.5	48.5	15.4	-	169
Lincoln	7	63.1	36.9	53.6	46.4	13.9	-	231
Shimmel	5	44.8	55.2	50.9	49.1	18.9	39	165
Foose	9	56.3	43.7	52.0	48.0	28.3	128	300
TOTAL 2nd GRADE		53.2	46.8	51.7	48.3	18.5	442	1,313
						PERCENTAGE BUSED		33.7%

The total number of children to be bused in this grade is 443, distributed in four of the six buildings that will house the Early Childhood Centers. This number is 33.7 percent of the total enrollment projected for the second grade in the year 1970-71.

Elementary Schools: 3-6 Grades

Table 3 summarizes our analysis of the projected number of elementary school children who will attend grades 3 to 6 in 1970-71. It shows a total of 55.2 percent blacks and 44.8 percent whites, a distribution of 50.5 percent boys and 49.5 percent girls, and a total of 22.6 percent children from families below the poverty level. In these four grades, 26.9 percent will be bused.

Of students likely to be enrolled in grades 3 to 6, 13.4 percent fall in the lower rank of a five-point achievement scale; 6.9 percent are in the higher level of the scale. Children in both extremes of the scale have been distributed among all the schools, so that no school will have a disproportionate number of students who are deficient in basic skills or of those who have high achievement ratings.

CUE PLAN FOR THE HARRISBURG SCHOOL SYSTEM

TABLE 3

SUMMARY OF PROJECTED 3-6 GRADES - 1970-71

School	Classrooms	Percentage Blacks	Percentage Whites	Percentage Male	Percentage Female	Percentage Below Poverty Level	Percentage Achievement Low	Percentage Achievement High	Bused In	Total No. Students
B. Franklin	23	57.6	42.4	47.8	52.2	24.7	13.6	6.2	235	594
Boas	12	50.0	50.0	52.2	47.8	28.2	19.2	9.0	110	312
Downey	18	63.4	36.6	49.6	50.4	25.7	11.7	9.6	169	470
Hamilton	27	59.8	40.2	51.1	48.9	24.7	14.8	4.9	177	732
Marshall	19	51.2	48.8	52.4	47.6	19.5	11.6	7.5	253	508
Melrose	22	46.8	53.2	48.7	51.3	16.4	13.3	8.6	-	581
Steele	25	53.8	46.2	51.9	48.1	19.1	11.5	5.6	89	628
Woodward	15	57.0	43.0	51.3	48.7	26.4	13.5	5.7	98	386
TOTAL 3-6 GRADES		55.2	44.8	50.5	49.5	22.6	13.4	6.9	1,131	4,211

PERCENTAGE BUSED 26.9%

7th & 8th Grades

For the intermediate schools, we project busing for all students who live west of the railroad tracks. This busing can easily be reduced by a substantial margin if children who live in the vicinity of the bridges and within a mile radius of the schools are allowed to walk to classes.

No busing is contemplated for high school students.

Though the data which we analyzed was in some instances incomplete, because some information will not be available for some time, we are convinced that carrying out our short-term plan is entirely feasible within the resources of the Harrisburg School District.

Still needed is more exact data on residence. Each child is now classified under a residence zone determined by the present neighborhood school organization. To improve distribution under the new plan, we recommend subdividing these zones so that the central pupil accounting division can pinpoint more exactly the area where a child lives. Distribution will be accomplished with the help of a computer, which guarantees the complete objectivity of the assignments.

IV. PREPARATORY STEPS

Between May and September, 1970, the Harrisburg Public Schools should take certain steps to prepare for the new school organization. The following are advisable:

Staff

1. Set up several orientation workshops for teachers, supervisors, and administrators to familiarize them with the new organization.

2. Set up orientation workshops for non-professional staff.

3. Increase recruitment of well-qualified black teachers.

4. Provide opportunities for early childhood teachers to meet and discuss needed facilities. They should also have the opportunity to work with the buildings and grounds committee in defining and implementing these needs.

5. Provide curriculum workshops for teachers on all levels to plan new curriculum and coordinate curriculum throughout the grades. Although curriculum probably should not change radically in the first year, the reorganization of the schools will provide new opportunities for imaginative programs and teaching methods. Staff may want to revise social studies, language arts, math and science and to include programs specifically geared to educationally disadvantaged children and slow learners.

6. Provide training sessions for early childhood and elementary teachers most of whom will not have taught in desegregated classes. Topics should include learning styles, pupil performance, teacher pupil relations, teacher expectations (it is important to generate high expectations of all

students), and discipline. Teachers should suggest topics for future training sessions. Each early childhood and elementary teacher might spend a week or more during this spring at a school with a different racial composition under a school exchange program.

Students

1. Arrange orientation meetings for students in their new schools with their teachers. Ninth graders, now assigned to the high school for the first time, should also meet at the high school with teachers and some upper classmen before school opens.

2. Provide as many interracial experiences as possible for children before September 1970. Some of these activities might include: a) a frank discussion in each elementary school class, perhaps led by a school psychologist, on racial relations and racial feelings; b) field trips shared by students who would be in the same classes in September; c) city-wide pupil exchanges; d) a two or three day science and arts encampment in which fifth and sixth graders participate together. Students in 4th, 5th, and 6th grades might form a youth council to plan projects for the new school setting.

3. Assign in each of the elementary schools additional black teacher aides, a home-school counselor, a psychologist and a reading teacher where possible. Volunteer parents can also help students adjust under the new plan.

Parents

1. Send to all parents a fact sheet on reorganization, including information on new programs, bus schedules and some of the problems involved.

2. Arrange for all parents of children in Early Childhood Centers through the 6th grade to ride the bus route before their children attend schools in the fall.

3. Recruit parents to be supervisors in the buses.

4. PTAs reorganized for each of the new schools should send letters of welcome to parents.

SECTION V

MAP ILLUSTRATING THE PLAN FOR QUALITY

DESEGREGATED EDUCATION

KEY

△ -- Early Childhood Centers

○ -- Grades 3 - 4 - 5 - 6

□ -- Grades 7 and 8

▭ -- Grades 9 - 12

1 - B. Franklin
2 - Boas
3 - Cameron
4 - Downey
5 - Foose
6 - Hamilton
7 - Lincoln
8 - Marshall
9 - Melrose
10 - Riverside
11 - Shimmell
12 - Steele
13 - Webster
14 - Woodward
15 - Camp Curtin
16 - Edison
17 - John Harris
18 - William Penn